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Stump, ed., REASONED FAITH: ESSAYS IN PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY IN HONOR OF NORMAN KRETZMANN

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BOOK REVIEWS

Reasoned Faith: Essays in Philosophical Theology in Honor of Norman Kretzmann, edited by **Eleonore Stump**. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993. Pp. viii and 364. $43.50 (cloth), $17.95 (paper).

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Reasoned Faith is not an essay book to review. Because it contains a wealth of good articles on a wide range of issues in philosophical theology, I cannot discuss all of the contributions in all of the detail they deserve. Anyway, here goes:

Scott MacDonald and Robert Audi discuss the nature of faith, which for each typically involves both a cognitive component, and a volitional component. Each one argues that the notion of faith may come apart from an element which it has been thought to entail. MacDonald argues that faith does not entail any sort of epistemic deficiency or sufficiency; one may have faith in a set of propositions, whether or not one is justified in believing them, whether or not one knows them, whether or not one is certain of them. Audi suggests—to put it crudely and approximatively—that (a certain kind of) faith does not entail belief. Suppose Alice has a natural tendency to believe in God, tends to have characteristically Christian emotional responses, and is receptive to evidence for God's existence. Suppose also that Alice accepts and puts into practice Christian moral teachings, and engages in Christian religious practices. Then, Audi argues, we can describe Alice as a person of faith, even if she does not believe that God exists, that Christ is the Son of God, and so on (because, say, she also believes that evil constitutes powerful [though inconclusive] evidence against the truth of Christianity). On Audi's account, Alice has faith, but the kind of faith she has is volitional, or non-doxastic.[1] If faith can be (fundamentally, if not entirely) non-doxastic, Audi argues, this has important consequences for the rationality of faith, inasmuch as the rationality conditions for non-doxastic faith are different from, and less stringent than, the rationality conditions for doxastic faith.

I think Audi makes a good and very interesting case for the possibility of non-doxastic faith, but I am unconvinced by MacDonald's claim that faith entails neither epistemic sufficiency nor deficiency. MacDonald considers and rejects various indirect arguments for the claim that one cannot have faith in what one has conclusive proof for, or is completely certain of. Thus he argues against Aquinas and John Hick that someone's (Christian) faith could still be voluntary, even if she had conclusive proof of the truths of Christian doctrine, in virtue of the voluntariness of her volitional response to those truths; and he argues against Robert Adams that faith needn't involve cognitive uncertainty about God, just because it involves

trust in Him. But my inclination to believe that faith necessarily involves uncertainty is not based on indirect arguments of the sort rejected by MacDonald. Instead, I just find it plausible that—in at least one standard sense of "faith"—it is part of the meaning of "faith" that one cannot have faith in what one is entirely certain of, and has conclusive proof for—any more than one can hope for what one is entirely certain of, and has conclusive proof for. ("I have faith in and proof of Christ's resurrection" sounds wrong to me, in much the same way as "I have hope for and proof of the resurrection of the dead.")[2] Perhaps MacDonald would say that the idea that uncertainty is built into the meaning of (at least one sense) of the term "faith" is due to a confusion of implication with implicature; but I would like to see an argument that this is so.

William Alston expounds and criticizes Aquinas' account of theological predication. In contrast to some of his own earlier thoughts on the matter, he argues that Aquinas' distinction between *res significata* and *modus significandi* in talk about God is compatible with Aquinas' view that perfection terms are applied analogously to God and creatures. But he argues that (i) we cannot get from the doctrine of divine simplicity to the claim that perfection predicates are not applied univocally to God and creatures, and (ii) philosophical theology in general, and Thomistic theology in particular, depend on the assumption that some perfection predicates can be applied univocally to God and creatures. He concludes that a broadly Scotistic or Occamist account of theological predication—on which at least some (abstract) perfection predicates may be applied univocally to God and creatures—is preferable to the Thomistic alternative. I found Alston's exposition of Aquinas clear and helpful, and his criticisms cogent.

Richard Swinburne offers a novel (to me, at least) argument against the view that God is timeless. Its crucial premiss is that for an event to be future just is for it is to be (now) causally affectable by some sufficiently powerful agent, and for an event to be past just is for it to be (now) unaffectable by any agent. From this premiss Swinburne concludes that a cause must precede its effect. But if a cause must precede its effect, and God stands in causal relations to the universe, then God is not timeless. Swinburne goes on to argue that God's temporality in no way makes Him a less sovereign or perfect being that He would otherwise be.

Although I agree with Swinburne that it is not obviously coherent to suppose both that God is timeless, and that He stands in causal relations to the world, I don't think that Swinburne has shown that it is incoherent. Swinburne's defense of the linchpin of his argument—the causal account of time—seems to me at bottom an (entirely fair) challenge to provide intelligible alternative account rather than a demonstration that no such account could be provided.

William Rowe argues that if, for every world God could create, there is a better one He could create instead, then God could not be an absolutely perfect being, inasmuch as some being (God Himself) could have done better than He actually did, and a Being cannot be absolutely perfect, if somebody could have done better than He did. Thomas Morris argues forcefully that the inference from "God could have done better" to "God could have been better" is quite doubtful. Though I agree, I still think that someone

who believes God is a perfect being ought to find the possibility that there are no best creatable worlds disquieting.[3] A perfect being, it seems, would prefer better worlds to less good ones. (A being who didn't even *pro tanto* prefer a better world w+ to a less world w- —a being who was, as it were, left cold by the marginal goodness of w+ with respect to w- —would surely be less good than he might be, in virtue of being less sensitive to goodness than he might be. And it is difficult to see why a being who *pro tanto* preferred a better world w+ to a less good world w- would lack an on balance preference for w+ over w-.) If, however, God prefers creating better worlds to less good ones, and if there is no best world He could create, the He seems condemned to act in such a way as to frustrate some of His own preferences. Whatever world w He creates, He will be creating a world w, when He perfectly well could have, and would all things considered rather have, created a world better than w. In creating w, rather than some particular w+ better than w, He will be foregoing something He considers desirable (w+), only to end up with something He considers on balance less desirable. This foregoing seems not only needless but pointless. There can be a point in foregoing something you consider desirable, if you end up with something more, or at least as desirable: but what could the point be of foregoing something you consider desirable, only to end up with something you consider on balance less desirable? All this raises a question about whether one can after all consistently believe in a perfect God and an imperfect world: for it is not obvious that a being who acts in such a way as to frustrate some of his own preferences, and who needlessly and pointlessly forgoes something he takes to be good,[4] can be a perfect being.

In a very rich piece, William Mann discusses the Lutheran ideal of pure love—a state involving disinterested love of God and hatred of oneself as sinful and worthy of damnation. Mann argues that pure love is no good thing, because the self-hatred it involves is inimical to hope and charity (towards God and creatures). The person who hates himself (in the way Luther has in mind) wants to be damned, and so cannot hope to be saved. Moreover, charity towards God is, as Aquinas puts it, a sort of *amicitia*, where *amicitia* involves knowledge, on the part of each party involved, of the other's love for him or her. So no one can have charity towards God, if she believes God hates her. Moreover, Mann argues, a person cannot (coherently) have charity towards her neighbor, if she hates herself for her sinfulness, and recognizes the sinfulness of her neighbor.

I share Mann's view that Lutheran pure love is (intrinsically, at least) not an (entirely) good state to be in. But I found Mann's arguments for that view somewhat puzzling. The gist of Mann's case against pure love is that it is (at least partly) bad, because of one of its components (self-hatred) stifles the growth of hope and charity, which are good. It seems, though, that a defender of Lutheran pure love could concede that self-hatred stifles hope and charity, and that hope and charity are good things. She could still insist that it is nevertheless (on balance) a good thing for a person (in this life) to attain a state of pure love, because after a person has attained that state, God will enable her to lose self-hatred, and acquire hope and charity towards God.[5] The idea might be that through self-hatred one will overcome the most important obstacle standing in the way of *amicitia* with God (an inability to

appreciate and respond appropriately to one's sinfulness); although in coming to hate oneself, one will also create new obstacles to a loving relationship with God, God will take care of them. How could God take away the self-hatred a pure lover has attained? By making His love for the pure lover known; presumably someone who—like the pure lover—hates herself because she wants to align herself with God, and believes God hates her, will cease to hate herself if she comes to believe God does not hate her.

It is interesting that Mann does not use a more direct line of argument against Luther. Mann tells us that according to Luther, those who love God most purely (the children of God) have as their only desire to fulfill the will of God. And, Luther claims, God "hates, damns, and wills evils to all sinners, that is to all of us." So, Luther concludes, someone who loves God purely must hate herself, and will her own damnation. The natural objection here is that, on Luther's own account, it is just not true that God hates and damns all of us: if that were the case, damnation would be universal. For Luther, not only does God love and save those who attain pure love of Him, He loves and saves some who do not. So, inasmuch as pure love involves wanting only to fulfill the will of God, having it does not entail the desire to be damned, but only to desire to be damned should God will it. The pure lover should be indifferent between being saved because God wills it, and damned because God wills it. (For if she preferred being damned because God wills to it to being saved because God wills it [or *vice-versa*] she would have a preference that went beyond the preference that God's will be done.) And she should not desire either her own damnation or her own salvation, inasmuch as in having either desire, she runs the risks of having a will not aligned with God's. Of course, if the pure lover knew that God willed her damnation, she could come to desire her own damnation because (rather than if) God willed it. But Luther himself insists that no pure lover could ever be in that position, because God will save all those who throw themselves utterly upon His will. So it seems that inasmuch as Lutheran pure love involves the pure and unalloyed desire that God's will be done, it should not involve the desire to be damned which is a central component of Lutheran self-hatred.

Marilyn McCord Adams offers an impassioned and powerful attack on alternatives to the doctrine of universal salvation. She argues that (i) an all-good, all-powerful, all-knowing God would not consign the impenitent to a traditional Hell; and (ii) such a God would not annihilate the impenitent, or leave them forever in a "benign" sort of hell (where life is still worth living). I found Adams' case for (i) quite compelling: it is hard to see why a loving and merciful God would forever keep in existence creatures whose will is fixed in evil, and whose existence is no longer a good for themselves, or for anyone else. (If even after a thousand, a million, a trillion...years of torment, there will never come a time when God either improves the lot of the damned or at least puts them out of their misery, He seems quite literally merciless, at least so far as they are concerned). I am less sure about her arguments for (ii). It does seem right to me that if God is loving and merciful, and if He can (non-coercively) draw a creature to Him, He will. But I am not sure about Adams' claim that God is "so powerful, so witting, and resourceful, that he can let created persons do

their damnedest and still save them." I entirely agree with Adams that for all we know God does have that ability; but it doesn't seem to obviously follow from God's being all-powerful (and all-good, and merciful) that He does. (Nor does it obviously follow from anything in Scripture). Unless we are sure God has that ability, it does not seem we can rule out the possibility that some creatures will never be saved (whether we think those not saved will be annihilated, or provided with the conditions for a life worth living by a merciful God). Perhaps, then, universal salvation is not something in which a Christian should believe, but rather something for which a Christian should hope.

Eleonore Stump discusses and to a certain extent defends some elements of Aquinas' theodicy, as set out in his commentary on the Book of Job. For Aquinas, she argues, the sufferings afflicting those who love God are good things to happen to them, because those sufferings remove obstacles to union with God, and hence ultimately to the happiness of the sufferer. Suffering is on Aquinas' view a kind of spiritual medicine—difficult to bear when it is administered, but ultimately for the best. As well as setting out Aquinas' views in a sympathetic and illuminating way, Stump considers and responds to some objections to them. One of them goes something like this:

> For Aquinas, God does not allow any suffering to afflict the saints which He does not "turn to their good." This seems to mean that, for Aquinas, God won't allow an evil to befall a saint unless (in the long run, and on balance) things will be at least as good for that saint as they would have been had that evil not occurred. And that has the (absurd) consequence that it is a bad thing to palliate or end someone's suffering (or, at least, the suffering of a saint).

Stump responds that suffering is intrinsically bad, and may be either instrumentally good (if it contributes to a cure for evil), or instrumentally bad (if it produces "spiritual toxicosis"). Because we cannot know whether a bit of suffering, if unprevented or unalleviated, would be curative or counterproductive, we should try to prevent or alleviate suffering. If our efforts to do so are frustrated, we may infer that the suffering is ordained to the spiritual health of the sufferer.

It is not immediately clear to me, though, why—if the continuation of some saint's ongoing suffering might for all we know be either (on-balance) beneficial or harmful—one should (*ceteris paribus*) try to alleviate that suffering, and (if the attempted alleviation fails) conclude from the futility of the attempt that the suffering was ordained towards the saint's spiritual benefit. Why not (try to) allow the suffering to go on, and (if the suffering is alleviated anyway) conclude that (continued) suffering would have been non-beneficial? Is there somehow a presumption in favor of the claim that for an ongoing bit of suffering to continue would be on-balance harmful? Why, on Aquinas' views, should there be such a presumption?

Also, suppose that St. Francis had lived a bit longer, or St. Thomas (Aquinas) had been born a bit earlier. And suppose that St. Thomas had found himself next to a sleeping St. Francis, and had noticed that a heavy

object was about to fall from the ceiling, and badly bruise St. Francis' leg, causing him a not inconsiderable amount of suffering. It seems clear that—even if St. Thomas is convinced of the sanctity of St. Francis—he should prevent the object from hitting St. Francis (say, by pushing him out of the way). It would be wrong for St. Thomas to do nothing. But it is unclear why, on St. Thomas' own principles, this should be so. For it is unclear that, on St. Thomas' principles, St. Francis is in any danger of being harmed. After all, St. Thomas believes that God allows only beneficial suffering to afflict the saints. Why couldn't he conclude that St. Francis is in no danger of being harmed, on the grounds that God will allow the falling object to hit St. Francis if but only if the suffering it causes St. Francis is beneficial to him? Someone might reply here that such reasoning would be illegitimate, because the truth-value of (a) "God allows only beneficial suffering to afflict the saints" is not independent of truth-value of (b) "St. Thomas will push St. Francis out of the way of a falling object." If (a) and (b) are both true, but (a) depends on the truth of (b), there is no difficulty about why St. Francis is in danger of being harmed, and about why it would be wrong for St. Thomas not to push him out of the way. But would Aquinas really want to say that God leaves the truth of (a) hostage to the free decisions of His (sinful) creatures? Would he really want to say that creatures are free to bring it about that God does not (always) allow only beneficial sufferings to afflict His saints? If not, there remains a problem about why St. Thomas should think that St. Francis is in danger of harm and in need of a push.

For reasons of space, I cannot discuss Peter Van Inwagen's plausible defense of a non-literal interpretation of the first three chapters of the book of Genesis, Philip Quinn's imaginative development of Abelardian themes in the attempt to go beyond a purely "satisfactive" account of the atonement, and Robert Adams' careful and helpful discussion of Kierkegaard's (often opaque, at least to me) views on truth and subjectivity. Suffice it to say that each merits extensive discussion, as do the contributions of George Mavrodes and Harry Frankfurt. In fact, there are no duds in the collection. For anyone who is interested in the philosophy of religion, and is not allergic to analytic philosophy, this book will be a worthwhile and enjoyable read. And that is as it should be, in view of all the contributions Norman Kretzmann has made to philosophical theology.

NOTES

1. Actually, Audi is uncertain whether Alice could have exclusively non-doxastic faith, though he thinks she could have primarily non-doxastic faith.
2. Audi appears to agree: he notes in passing that as the term "faith" is standardly used, one cannot have faith that p, if one is certain that p (p. 77).
3. I argue for this in more detail in my "Perfection in Creator and Creation" (unpublished manuscript).
4. That is, there are things God takes to be good, which He needlessly and pointlessly forgoes.
5. Luther's approving citation of St. John's "He who hates his soul in this world preserves it in eternal life" suggests he would not be averse to regarding self-hatred as a state only temporarily good to be in.